

Natural England Board

Meeting number: NEB P07 08

Date: 8 April 2007

Title: Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI – confirmation of notification

Purpose: The purpose of the paper is to seek approval to confirm the notification of Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board: confirm Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI with modifications to the boundary and citation

Background

1. The Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI was notified on 16 August 2006 under sections 28C and 28D of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as inserted by Schedule 9 to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

2. Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay is considered to be of special interest for its nationally important:

- coastal geomorphology
- saltmarshes
- sand dunes
- vegetated shingle
- saline lagoons
- standing waters
- lowland ditch systems
- basin fens
- populations of four plant species listed in Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- assemblage of Schedule 8, nationally rare and nationally scarce vascular plants
- populations of the vulnerable Warne's thread-moss *Bryum warneum*
- populations of water voles *Arvicola terrestris*
- assemblage of breeding birds associated with shingle beaches and saltmarsh, lowland damp grasslands, lowland open waters and their margins, and scrub
- breeding numbers of 16 species of bird
- assemblage of over 20,000 waterfowl in the non-breeding season
- wintering numbers of 17 species of bird and three species during passage periods
- metapopulations of great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*
- endemic species and subspecies of invertebrates
- populations of two invertebrate species listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- populations of 10 endangered, vulnerable and rare invertebrate species
- assemblages of invertebrates occurring on dry coastal habitats
- assemblages of wetland invertebrates.

3. The Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI includes all or parts of eight previously notified SSSIs, and also enlarges the area previously notified to include adjacent areas of active and 'fossil' geomorphology, grazing marsh, freshwater wetlands, sand dunes, saltmarsh and vegetated shingle. The boundary has been drawn to include land supporting the features of biological and geomorphological interest, linked to the formation of Dungeness foreland, Romney Marsh and their associated habitats. It includes areas of intertidal, subtidal and terrestrial habitat that support the features of special interest or which are necessary to ensure their long-term sustainability and allows the management of these features to be properly considered in the context of the whole coastal and grazing marsh systems. Thirty-nine small areas (totalling 15.74 ha) within three of the previously notified SSSIs are not considered to be of special interest.

4. The notification package (attached as an annex to the Officers' Report to the Non-Executive Board) was issued on 16 August 2006 and explains why Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay was notified by English Nature as an SSSI. The package also explains why English Nature was of the opinion that parts of the previously notified SSSIs are not of special interest.

5. The Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay SSSI has 675 owners and occupiers and is the subject of 38 outstanding objections. The period for making objections and representations ran from 16 August 2006 to 18 December 2006. As four owner-occupiers were identified later than the notification date they were given four months from the date they were notified to submit their representations.

6. Natural England has a duty to notify land as SSSI where it is of the opinion that land is of special interest. Natural England has discretion about whether to notify an enlargement to a SSSI under section 28C, and notify areas which in its opinion are not of special interest under section 28D. That discretion was exercised in this case for the reasons set out in section 1.1 of the Officers' Report to the Non-Executive Board.

7. The selection of this site against the SSSI Guidelines is dealt with fully in the Supporting Information to the SSSI Notification package; for the assessment of each of the qualifying interests against the published guidelines please refer to pages 103 - 169 of Section 2 of the confirmation package.

8. The Officers' Report to the Non-Executive Board in the SSSI confirmation package describes the site and its special interest, the reasons why, in the opinion of English Nature, parts of the previously notified SSSI are not of special interest, and considers the objections and representations made in respect of the 16 August 2006 notification.

Issues

9. The grounds for the objections have been carefully considered by officers' of Natural England. Officers' recommend to the Non-Executive Board that the notification of the SSSI should be confirmed under section 28C with modifications to the boundary and the citation. The Non-Executive Board is required to take a decision upon whether or not to confirm this SSSI on or before 15 May 2007.